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Leeson, Loraine ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6684-3911> and Light, Ann (2014) Citizen innovation: DIY design and the Thames water turbine. In: Creative Citizens, 18-19 Sep 2014, Royal College of Art, London. . [Conference or Workshop Item]

Presentation

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Citizen Innovation: DIY Design and the Thames Water Turbine


Ann Light
Northumbria University

Loraine Leeson
artist

Overview

- The roots of the project in *Democratising Technology*
- Growing ambitions
- Five years doing patchwork projects on patchwork funding
- One water turbine later...
- What we learnt

Democratising Technology



I like your new
tablecloth.

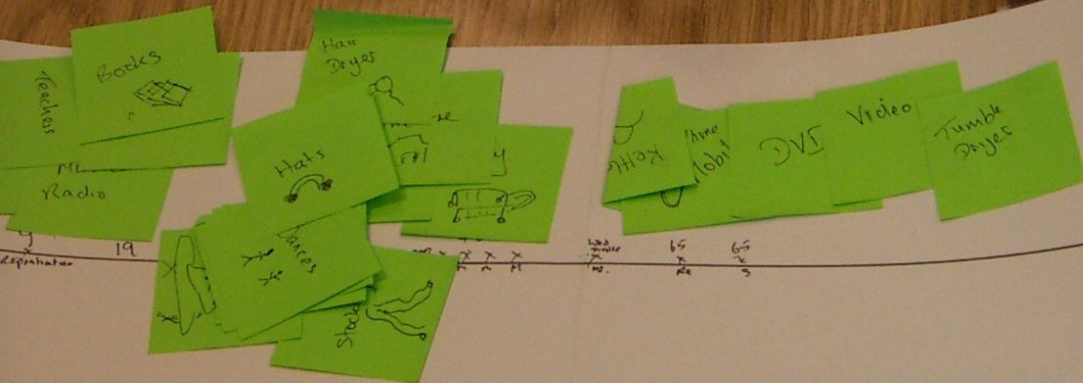
Thanks! But in
the *future*...

Yeah...??

Well...in the *future*,
this tablecloth
won't be just a
tablecloth; it'll be a
cloak of ***invisible
information...***

Cor! So what'll
it look like
then...?

- To devise methods to engage people outside the design world in discussions about the design of digital technology, in particular, networks;
- To help them envision new social arrangements enabled by technology;
- To equip people to deal with the challenges of conceptualising developments that seem both abstract and currently irrelevant to their experience.



DVD

Projects
I like today
filming
World wide
meeting my
Prince

Other
Planets
Occupied
by beings





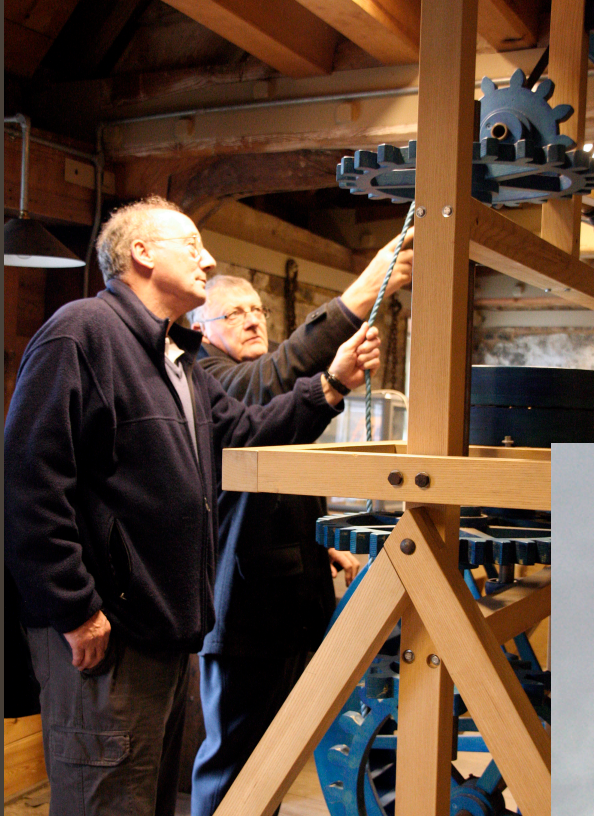
GeezerPower



The Geezers

- The Geezers Club, one of the 5 groups of older people.
- Fitted brief: older people, little access to formal education when young; typical use of digital technology for age-group.
- Ranged from mid-60s to early 80s in age, varied life experience, left school at 14 skilled manual labour: electricians and engineers, market porter, local Docks.
- Tuesday lunchtimes in a community hall, providing an alternative to “pub and betting shop”.
- Initially gave 3 weekly 2-hour sessions to help us.

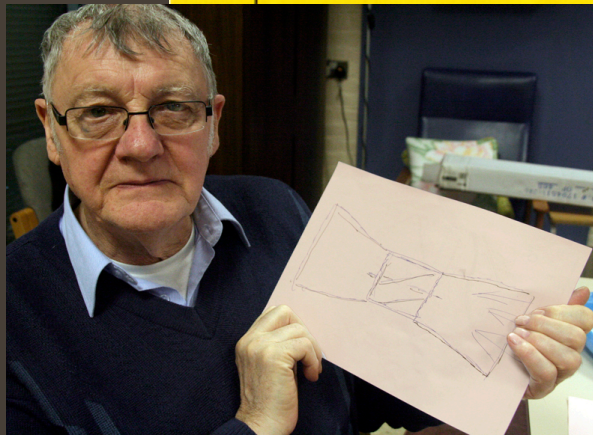
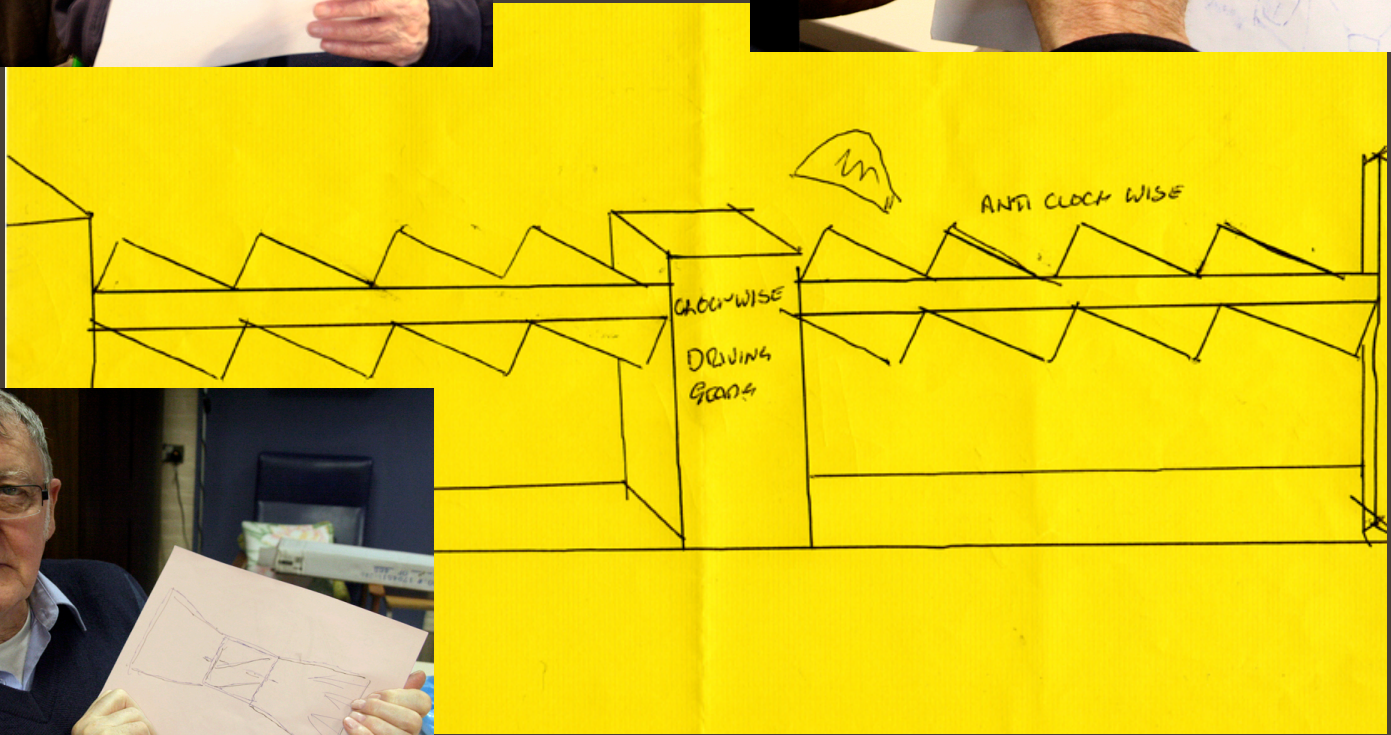




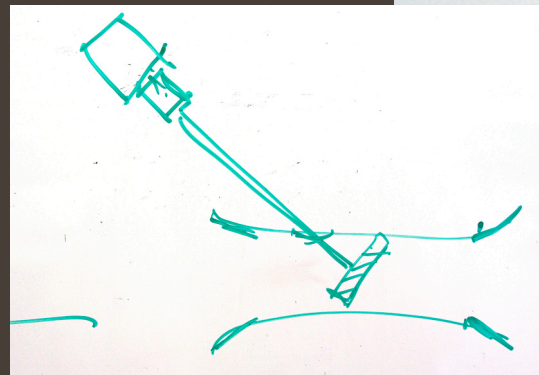
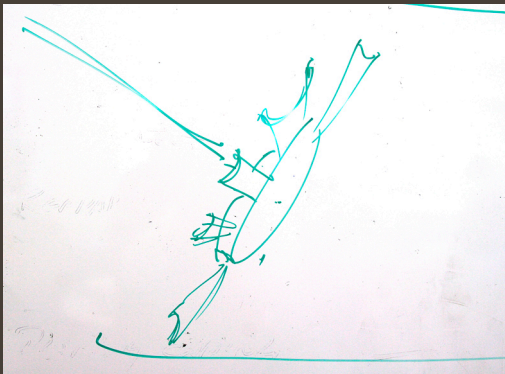
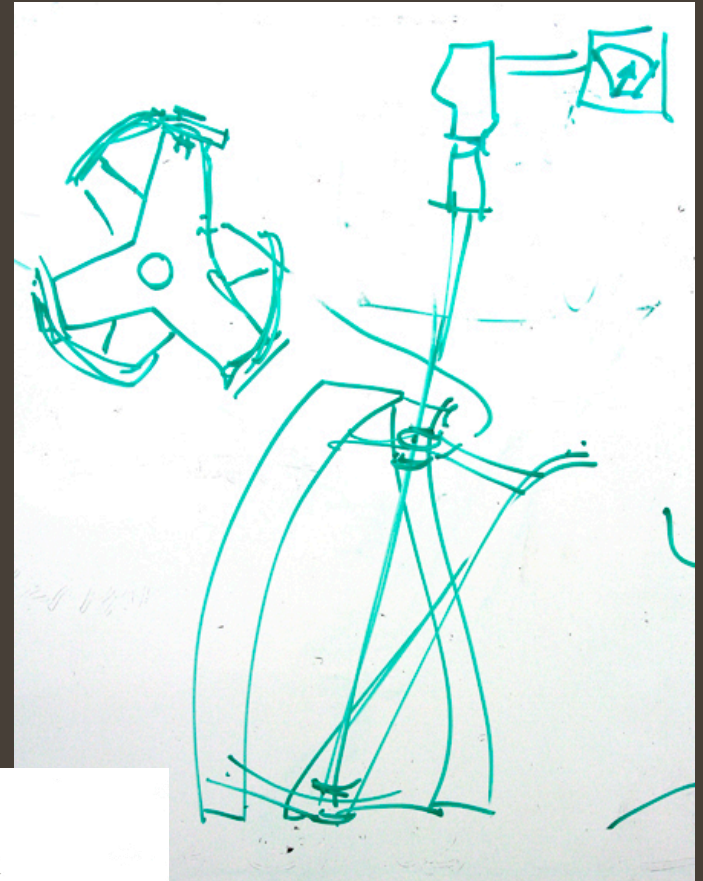
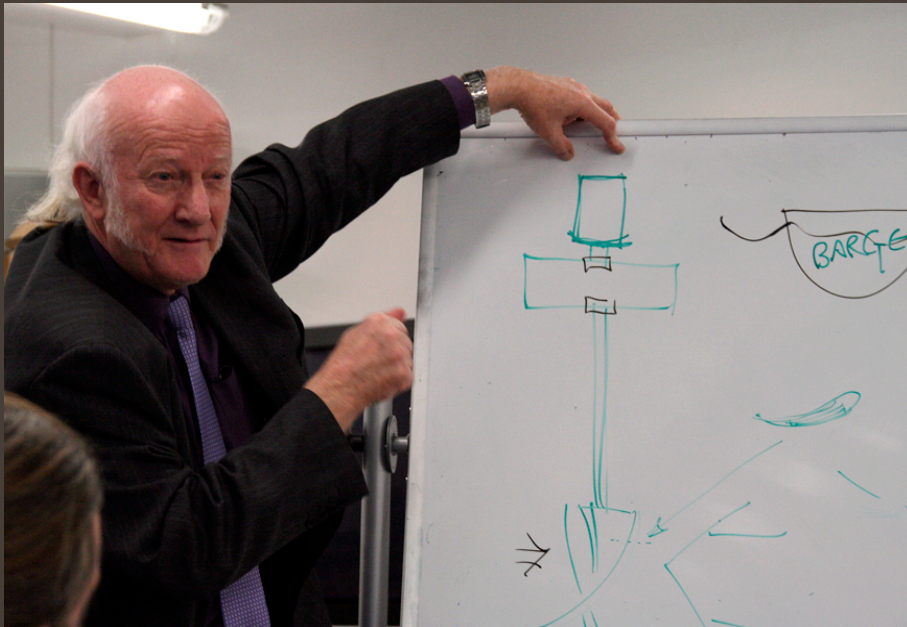


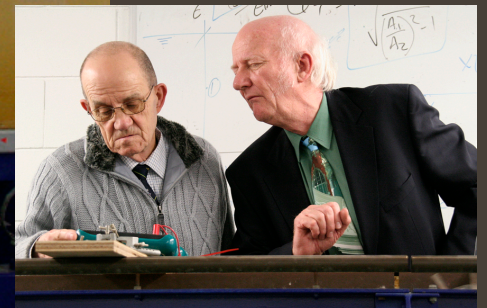
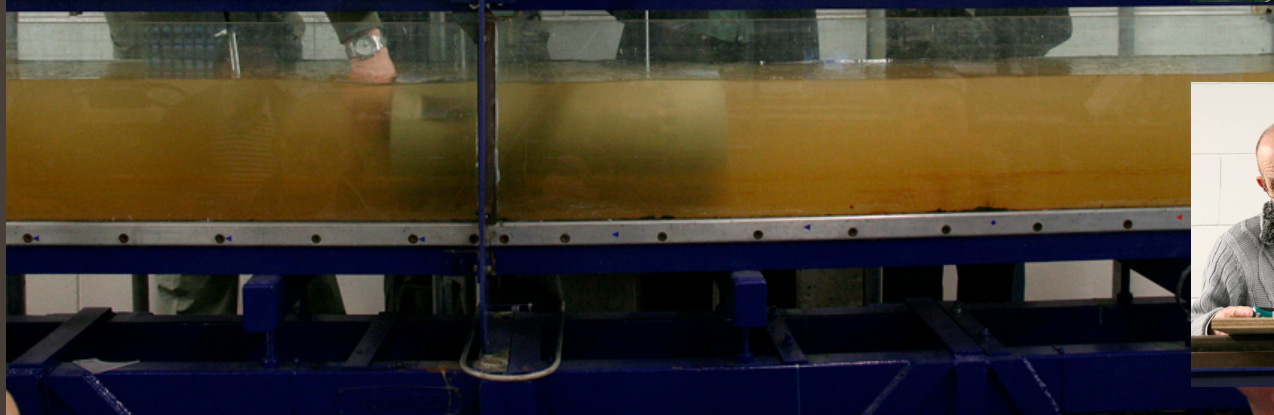
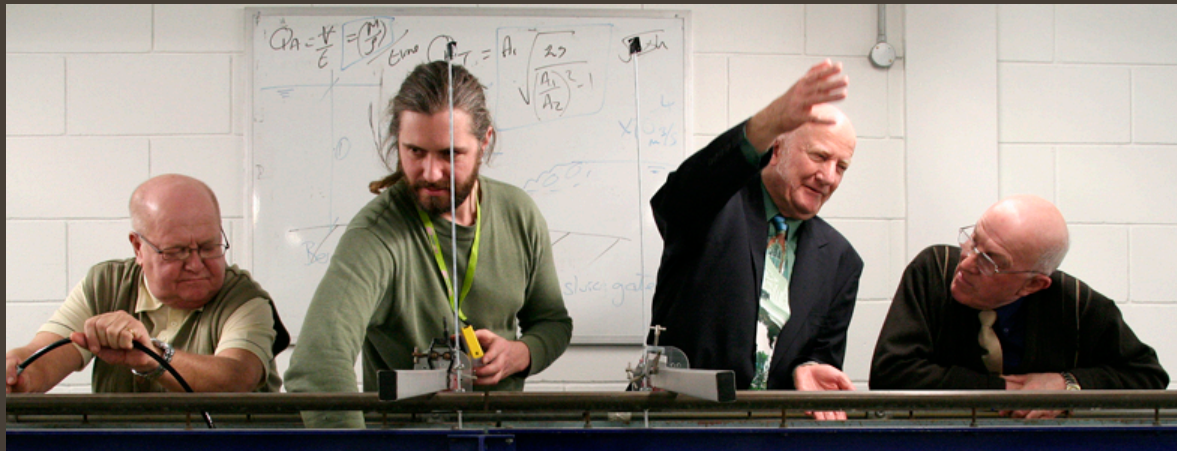
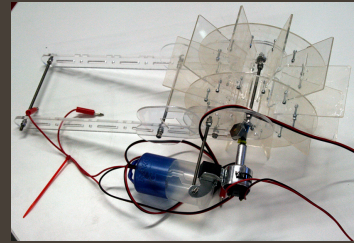
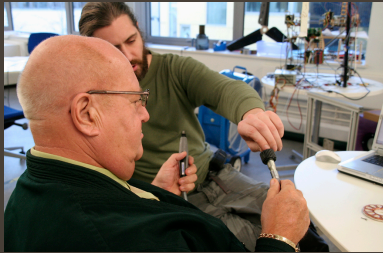


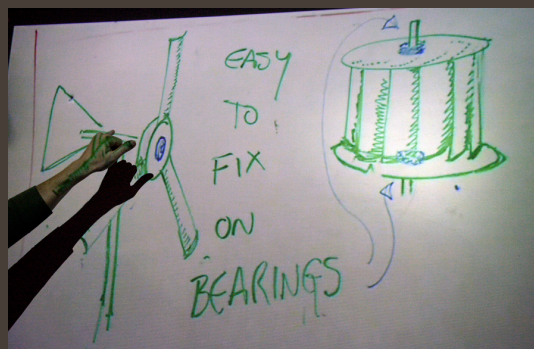
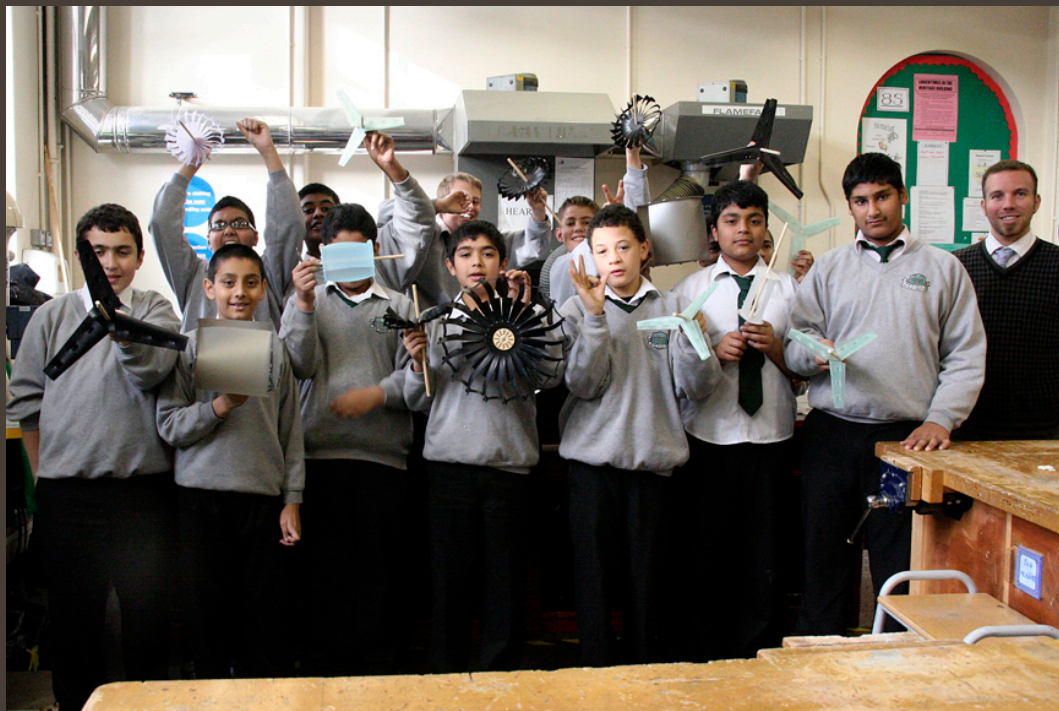
Active Energy

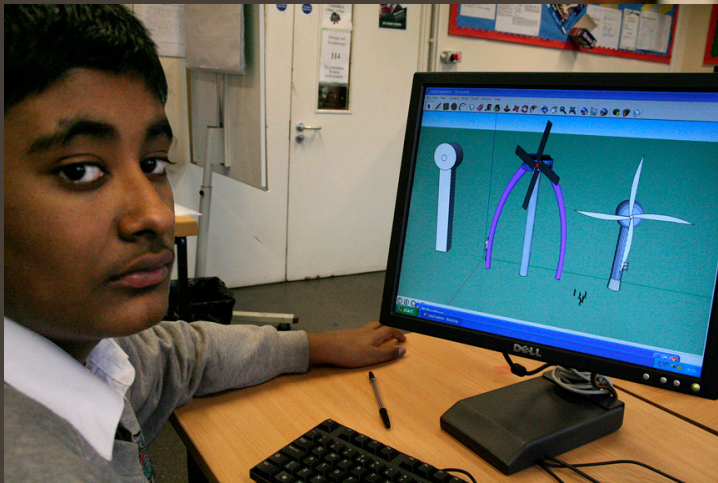


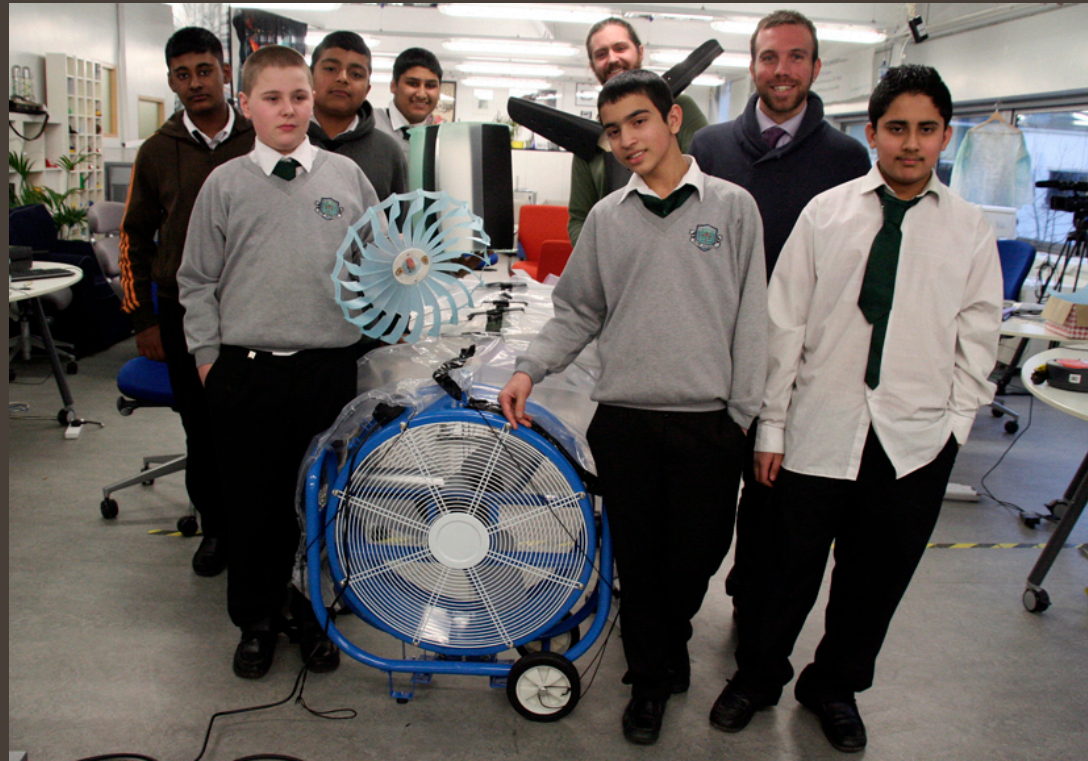
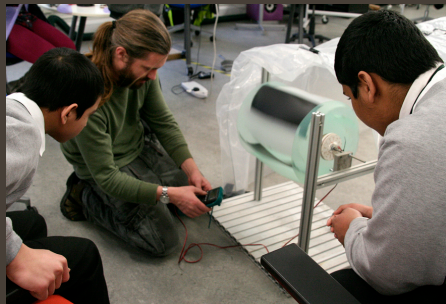
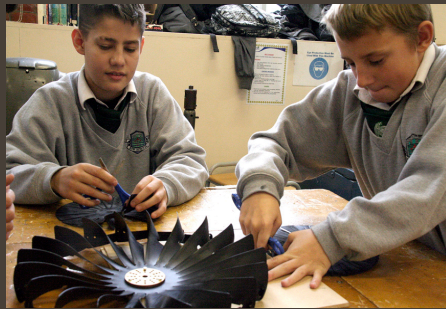
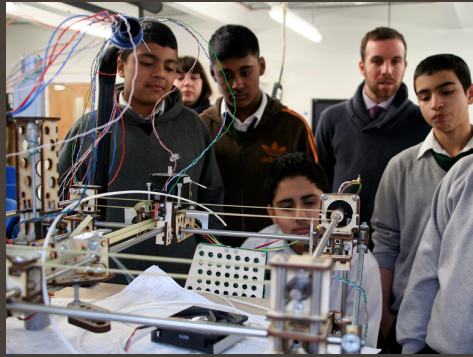




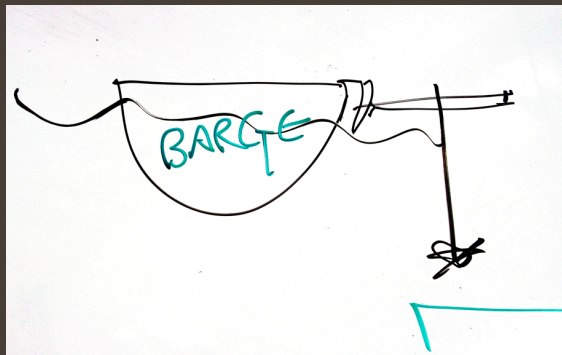
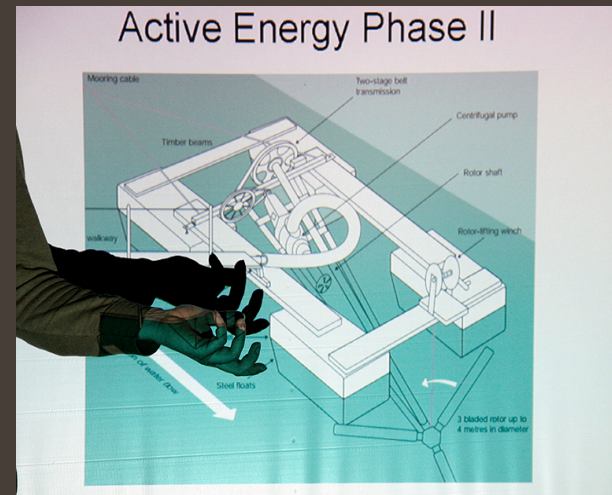




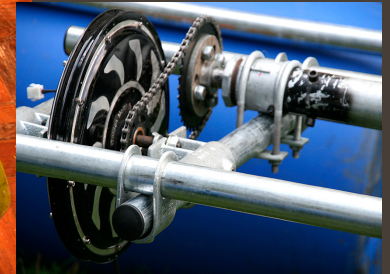














What can this extraordinary case of going it alone, while doing it with others, teach us about design and the conditions we need to carry it out?

People

- Artist
- Geezers
- Mechanical engineer
- Systems engineer
- School kids
- Barge/restaurant owner
- Geography student
- Drama/computer science/design researcher
- etc

Some issues

- Stewardship/mediation (doing stuff vs making stuff happen) – openings, transfer of ownership, intermediary tiers
- Sustainability of group – funding, shared values, endurance: do we need it?
- Match – locus of relevance, who contributes and arbitrariness of participants, potential to generalise
- Design vs Innovation – making new stuff or changing practices in the wider world?

Funding challenges

- Patchwork funding led to a patchwork of projects
- Good in range and experience
- Broader-based innovation – more people, more contexts, more learning (both ways)
- Design constantly thwarted as losing initiative and forgetting detail of craft through delays in testing, etc

Thanks...

- All our participants, younger and older
- Photo credits: include Loraine Leeson and Jim Prevett of SPACE
- The QMUL team for DemTech: Lois, Pat and Gini.
- Everyone at SPACE
- AHRC/EPSRC funding under the “Designing for the 21st Century” call; AHRC grant: Participants United!
- Active Energy stalwarts, such as Toby Borland of SmartLab, University of East London and, obviously, Loraine Leeson.

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